



February 4, 2021

Via email: ppetty@leg.state.vt.us

House Committee on Corrections and Institutions
Vermont General Assembly
115 State Street
Montpelier, VT 05633-5301

Re: Governor's Capital Budget Proposal FY 22-23
AHS Section 2: Middlesex Therapeutic Residential Replacement

Dear House Committee on Corrections and Institutions:

I am the founder of MadFreedom, a national human and civil rights advocacy organization based in Poultney, Vermont, with a mission to secure political power to end discrimination against people based on perceived mental state.

I write to inform the Committee about opposition among the psychiatric survivor community to the Governor's Capital Budget Proposal that would allocate \$11.6 million to build a second psychiatric hospital in Vermont. Although the name of the proposed facility -- Middlesex Therapeutic Residential Center -- suggests that it will be a residence, it will in fact operate as a locked facility where people are not free to come and go. Essentially, the facility will operate as a carceral, psychiatric hospital.

Vermont's mental health system has many needs but not among them is a second, state-run psychiatric hospital.

Vermonters with mental health challenges need housing, employment and social connection. Vermont has invested so little in community resources, that its lack of investment is creating its own need for more intrusive interventions such as carceral, psychiatric hospitals. It's time to invest in Vermonters.

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I urge you to solicit public testimony on this matter. There are truly multiple views on this issue, all of which should be aired and considered, notwithstanding the Governor's position.

Thank you for your consideration.

Very truly yours,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Wilda L. White". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'W'.

Wilda L. White, JD, MBA
Founder



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